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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 64th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. STEIN (Germany)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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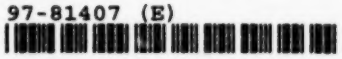

In the absence of Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe), Mr. Stein (Germany), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 140: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (continued) (A/51/890 and A/51/906)

(a) FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (continued)

1. Mr. HALBWACHS (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the support account for peacekeeping operations (A/51/890), said that the Secretary-General recommended that the General Assembly should confirm the new funding mechanism it had provisionally adopted in resolution 50/221 B. In addition, for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998, the Secretary-General estimated that resource requirements should be funded from the support account in the amount of $35,129,400 net of staff assessment, compared to an approved level of $30,534,400 for the current period. The Secretary-General also proposed a staffing establishment of 364 temporary posts, an increase of 19 posts compared to the staffing level approved for the current period.

2. As noted in paragraph 28, the number of posts allocated to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General would decrease by one post at the Under-Secretary-General level and the support account-funded staffing establishment of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would increase by 12 temporary posts. An increase of six support account-funded posts was proposed for a number of Department of Administration and Management units; an increase of two support account posts was proposed for the Office of Legal Affairs.

3. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee contained in document A/51/906, said that the Advisory Committee had reviewed the background to the Secretary-General's request for additional resources and had referred to the previous funding mechanism and the new funding mechanism which had been provisionally adopted by the General Assembly on the Advisory Committee's recommendation. The Secretary-General had proposed an amount of $35.1 million net of staff assessment, which represented an increase of $4.6 million compared with the previous support account appropriations.

4. Although the Advisory Committee appreciated that the overall level of peacekeeping activity would decline as more and more missions were liquidated, it had concluded that there were a number of shortcomings in the Secretariat's analysis of the workload of peacekeeping missions, for it had had difficulty relating the Secretary-General's proposals for net additional posts to the actual or projected workload. In previous recommendations, the Advisory Committee had requested not only that new posts should be supported, but also that existing posts should be justified in terms of the workload. As the workload statistics had not been accompanied by a proper analysis of how those statistics related to the resources that were being sought, the Advisory Committee had been unable to agree to all the new posts requested by the Secretary-General.

5. As indicated in paragraph 5 of its report, hypothetical application of the old funding mechanism would generate support account income projected at some $18.6 million, which fell far short of the $35.1 million sought by the Secretary-General. Even though the Advisory Committee had not specifically indicated that the General Assembly should reconfirm the application of the new funding mechanism, it had nevertheless made reference to its own recommendation when it agreed with the Secretary-General that the new methodology proposed by him should be the one used to determine resources for the support account.

6. Mr. MENKVELD (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked the Secretariat to explain the reason for the late submission of the two reports before the Committee.

7. Mr. SIAL (Pakistan) reminded the Secretariat that the General Assembly had specifically requested that, should a document be issued late, the reasons for the delay should be given.

8. Mr. HOSANG (Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that the report had been late because the Secretariat had been expecting a decision on the matter of gratis personnel, which would in turn have impacted on the funding of the support account for peacekeeping operations.

9. Mr. MENKVELD (Netherlands) said that he failed to see the connection between the support account and the matter of gratis personnel, especially in the light of paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 50/221 B which had requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive proposal on the total requirement for human resources from all sources of funding for the backstopping of peacekeeping operations. That request had been made in May 1996, quite independently of the matter of on-loan personnel.

10. Mr. HOSANG (Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division) repled that, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General some 140 posts were filled by gratis personnel. If a decision had been taken regarding such personnel, some of those 140 posts might have been moved to the support account or elsewhere. Such a move would undoubtedly have had an impact on the funding arrangements for the support account, which would have affected the presentation of the item to the General Assembly.

11. Mr. SIAL (Pakistan) said that the report of the Secretary-General did not conform to the request made in resolution 50/551 B. The Secretariat should indicate why a comprehensive proposal on the total requirement for human resources had not been submitted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

12. The CHAIRMAN said that, in view of the number of items yet to be discussed at the current session, the Committee secretariat had drawn up a revised proposed programme of work according to which non-peacekeeping issues (primarily the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, procurement reform, review of external oversight mechanisms and gratis personnel) would be discussed at evening meetings, while peacekeeping issues and the two international tribunals would be discussed at morning and afternoon meetings.

13. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said that, since the issue of gratis personnel was related to that of peacekeeping operations, she hoped that the meetings on gratis personnel would not be held late at night.

14. She noted that, although the programme of work, as contained in document A/C.5/51/L.58/Rev.1, provided for the consideration, on 28 May, of the programme performance report for the biennium 1996-1997, which had been requested by the General Assembly in its resolutions 50/214 and 50/221, that item did not appear on the new programme being proposed for the current week. Since that report was important for the Committee's deliberations on the budget for the coming year, she asked the Secretariat to specify when it would be reviewed.

15. With respect to the assertion that the report on the support account had been postponed pending a decision on gratis personnel by the General Assembly, she said that as the report had been requested in a resolution of the General Assembly, the Secretariat had a responsibility to submit it.

16. Mr. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that she agreed with the revised proposed programme of work. The representative of Mexico had made a compelling point in stressing the Secretariat's obligation to respond when the General Assembly requested documents.

17. Mr. ARMITAGE (Australia) asked when the Committee would consider the reports on the two international tribunals, including both their financing and the relevant reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

18. Mr. HANSON (Canada), speaking in his capacity as coordinator of informal consultations on the two international tribunals, said that a number of delegations had expressed concern at the fact that late issuance of the relevant documents had delayed consideration of the financing of the two international tribunals. Considering the political importance of the issues dealt with by the two tribunals, the documents on the administrative and budgetary aspects of their operation should have been issued on time.

19. Ms. RODRÍGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that she, too, was concerned about the late submission of important documents and agreed with the Mexican delegation that the Secretariat's failure to respond to Member States' requests for documents was very serious. The Secretariat should provide a satisfactory answer in that regard by the end of the week.

20. Mr. FAGUNDES DO NASCIMENTO (Brazil) said that his delegation was still waiting for the documents referred to in General Assembly resolution 51/211, which the Secretariat had promised to provide the previous week.

21. Mr. MENKVELD (Netherlands) said he agreed with the proposal to focus, in the Committee's evening meetings, on the four issues mentioned by the Chairman. He shared the views expressed by the previous speakers, especially the representatives of Australia and Canada and noted that the late issuance of reports was ironic in the light of the many efficiency projects described to the Committee by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management.

22. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had not received advance copies of the Secretariat's reports on the two tribunals until 9 May 1997, and had received an additional 200 pages of documentation on 23 May. The Secretariat's reports should have been ready in February. It was frustrating for the Advisory Committee to be asked to consider such a large amount of advance documentation (which was not available in all of the official languages) in such a short time. Usually, when the Secretariat's reports were submitted late, the effect was not apparent because the Advisory Committee made extraordinary efforts to submit its reports promptly. Since the Advisory Committee and Secretariat offices such as the Programme Planning and Budget Division did their utmost to prepare reports on time, the lateness of documentation could only be traced to a shortage of resources for preparing such reports.

23. The CHAIRMAN, speaking in his capacity as a member of the Advisory Committee, said that the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had described the situation accurately.

24. Mr. SIAL (Pakistan) said that the statement that resources were insufficient was inconsistent with the Secretary-General's proposal to eliminate 1,000 posts. The late submission of documentation was inexcusable. However, he was not criticizing the Advisory Committee's work; on the contrary, he was sure that all delegations appreciated and commended its efforts.

25. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that it was imperative to ensure that the Committee had enough time for a substantive discussion of both the budget and Office of Internal Oversight Services reports on the two tribunals, especially the one for Rwanda.

26. The CHAIRMAN said that an answer concerning the performance report referred to by the representative of Mexico would be provided at the formal meeting of the Committee on 29 May 1997.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.